

## George Street students ? past and present ? prepare to leave their lasting marks



**By Brock Weir**

George Street Public School students have been hard at work making their mark on the world.

It might seem like a heady task for the kids, who range in age from Kindergarten through Grade 3, the entire span of the school, but they were more than up to the challenge as they get ready for this Saturday's celebration of the nearly 60-year-old school as it marks the end of its final school year.

Taking in hand wooden rounds sawn from branches, over 110 students, teachers, and a handful of parents, took their paints and markers to create a lasting symbol of their time at George Street, creating a large display that will take pride of place in this tightknit community's new school when they merge with Aurora Senior Public School this September as Wellington Public School.

The artistic endeavour was the brainchild of kindergarten teacher Mrs. Granger who took her inspiration from the book 'The Dot', which shows kids how to make their mark on the world, and leave their mark in time.

Robyn Scanga, a former George Street P.S. student, has left more than one mark on the George Street community. She's notched one more as a parent of three children who have experienced the school and another mark, which becomes particularly meaningful this weekend, as one of the co-organizers of Saturday's farewell to the venerable school.

Ms. Scanga recently visited her former Grade 4 teacher, Elsie Adair, an Aurora resident who taught at George Street from the very beginning. After being handed an envelope of photos and other mementos Ms. Adair had saved over the years, Ms. Scanga was conscious that a treasure trove had been entrusted to her.

Then, as she made her way with the envelope, a solitary photo fell out and onto the floor. It was a photo of her, the only photo in the cache featuring one student and one student alone.

'I didn't know what it meant, but obviously I am supposed to be doing this,' she says, of helping to organize the final bash.

Ms. Scanga is one of a busy organizing committee who have tasked themselves with making sure everything is just right for the celebrations, which will include photos and artefacts collected by the group, with special contributions from Ms. Adair, a chance for current and former students and faculty to tour the building, pick up a few specially created keepsakes to mark the occasion, take

part in a barbeque, and listen to the debut performance of a musical tribute to George Street created by local musician Glen Marais and the students.

While Mr. Marais devised the chorus, each class was tasked to create a verse.

'We're excited and everything is coming together,' says co-organizer Lora Georgiou, whose kids attend the school. 'I think next week will be great. It is a very sweet experience. By the time the kids get to Grade 3, they are already looking forward to 'the big school', the lockers, the big kids. I don't think they are grieving, so why go through all the trouble of this open house and things like that? For the people who do know the school, it is their last turn to have a look at this, but maybe these kids can later take a look back and see that they had all this cool stuff to do, we had this party [and it will be a memory]. Some of the teachers are already upset about leaving, but once you accept it, you get excited about all the new opportunities you have.'

Once upon a time, Ms. Scanga may have been one of those people excited about leaving George Street and all the new opportunities that meant, but becoming very involved in organizing this event has provided a bit of a different perspective.

'When I left I never really gave it a second thought,' she recalls. 'Then I moved back [to Aurora] just down the street from where I grew up. I have had a really great time looking through all the old pictures and reminiscing about things [the school] used to do, but you can see how some things never change. It may look a little different, but the premise of what they learned and what they taught here is really the same.'

Ms. Georgiou agrees.

'When something is about to end, I think we appreciate what a nice school this is,' she says. 'I always thought it was a nice and awesome school, but it is not until you know you can't have it anymore that you think, 'I'm really going to love this last year and I am really going to savour this time' because we know it is coming to an end.'

The Celebration of George Street School gets underway at the school itself this Saturday, May 23, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The performance is set for 11 a.m., and the barbeque at 1 p.m., but activities run both inside and outside the school throughout the day. Returning students from the past 58 years are invited to keep a particular eye out for some of their artwork saved by teachers over the decades 'if you see anything of yours, it is yours to keep.